



**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
Minutes  
April 6, 2021**

**Commission Present:** Farrell, Lantieri, Traverse, Johnson, Todd, and Hurley

**Staff Present:** Wight, Sauve, Cahill and O'Daniel

The meeting was convened at 4:42p.m. by Traverse

Introductions by Traverse of Commission members and staff for public.

**Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda by Johnson, second by Lantieri, motion carried.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Traverse asked to waive the reading of the consent agenda and motions into the record for approval.

Todd wants to make sure the recordings and minutes are available for the public. Parks is working on that.

Approval of consent agenda by Todd, second by Johnson, motion carried.

**FY21 Project Updates: Sophie Sauve, Parks Comprehensive Planner**

Sauve opened by explaining she would be sharing an overview of projects that are active and what's coming up soon. What's happening, what we're busy with and where you can jump in. She shared her screen with a map of where there are active projects.

Planning Team has decided to use their icon process so that the public can see and be involved. Lightbulb is "collecting Ideas" from the public and staff, pencil is "design process" and "check mark" is complete.

311 North Avenue – Lightbulb Phase. Ongoing projects are the Stone House Rehabilitation, roof repairs and the management plan. Upcoming in FY22 is work on the natural trail and multi-use pathway.

Wight spoke to the Stone house saying that we have the architect on and he's working on how to highlight the historical structure and make it a special place for our conservation program and the public. One example is the plan to open up the original front porch to bring back the historical look and also open up the front for public use (bathroom). This allows for public access, which is part of the requirements for the funding, and the ability for staff to simultaneously be safely behind locked doors. Everyone feels like the architect really hears us.

Parks team is coordinating with a contractor to repair some spots in the skate park.

Arms Forest - trail design-build, ongoing projects. On-site meeting soon to determine trail work.



Battery Park – Chief Greylock we well as other projects are being looked at. The team has come to the conclusion that the best plan is going to be to make a master plan for Battery Park as a whole.

Greenway – changes that will start happening downtown between college and maple. Bike path is closed between College & King currently. Contractor has been selected and will hopefully have more details at the next meeting. We will be bidding out the Oakledge work in the coming weeks.

Boathouse – currently in the scoping study. Not a funded project yet, but needs to be addressed so looking for funding. Need to have someone focus in on the space and evaluate what needs to happen there.

Calahan Park – In the beginning phase of the Master Plan – at the community needs and wants stage. Meeting with the gardeners next week for focus groups as well as neighbors and other staff members who know the park's maintenance needs.

Champlain Park – on the horizon. Playground redesign and replacement. After construction bidding season they will begin working on the design of that park.

Ethan Allen Park – will be going through a Master Planning phase mid-way through FY22.

Community Boathouse Marina – RFP for a gangway lift, our maintenance teams will be focusing this.

Leddy Park – stairs to the beach and ADA access. We have been reworking some of that design and are putting it out to bid. The stairs are actively in progress – design is in process and that work should start soon. We are also working on the pause place and exercise equipment. And we're looking forward to a shelter and other upgrades.

North Beach Campground – construction should start next week on the current projects. The pump out road and improvements are in the works. The maintenance building has come down. The pull through and main road way designs are being worked on now.

Oakledge Park – A large portion of the funding is coming from the federal government, but that process has been very slow. We have been assured that the funding is coming, but this project will more than likely not be happening this summer. We will be working to get everything in place and ready for that.

Perkins Pier – We are finished with the first third of this project. We had a meeting with over 100 attendees. John Adams-Kolitz did a great job answering all of the questions in real time and delivered the answers in a positive way. Planning team had a great time going through that process with the community. It helped us understand some of the priorities that the public has as well as cross reference them with our priorities. It was a great meeting. Looking forward to the second meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>, which will be more focused on design. We are working with the consultants on what was taken away from the meeting. They are a very visionary group. It would be great to have everyone attend the next meeting!

Schiffiliti Park – The City was awarded a grant through VTrans to put a pathway through the park. We have a three year project ahead of us with that, and we are currently at the very beginning. Max is



working on an RFP and what it means to work under a VTrans grant. We are also planning to transition one of the baseball fields to a softball field.

Schmanska Park – The barn renovation is complete! There was extra money after the renovations, which we are planning to put toward the walk way and potentially ADA parking.

Smalley Park – Playground re-design is in process.

Starr Farm Park – The dog park fence replacement was done last year. Concrete pads have been bid out to be done at the dog park and for the fitness equipment that will be installed at Starr Farm.

System Wide – Paul has had a vendor come out and do some significant playground replacements. He has operated a lean budget and has purchased kick mats underneath swings. He has done really fantastic work on the playgrounds. Overall restroom designs – On the horizon! Example, Upper Shelter at Oakledge. We are continuing to work on signage and wayfinding. We are also responding to community needs that we can address within our budgetary constraints – picnic tables and benches are a few examples. Opened the floor for questions.

Todd gave kudos for the Perkins Pier meeting and is hoping that those same successes will happen with the upcoming Calahan meeting. Staggering amount of projects that the Planning Team is balancing. Todd then asked about the Moran frame – how does that factor into the projects?

Wight responded that that is a CEDO project. It will most likely become a BPRW project down the road. When they are looking at future funding that is when they will reach out to the community for input. Basic things have not been funded yet – water, electricity, bathroom, top soil, bird deterrent etc. Images that were put out about a year ago were more “what this space could be” with funding/fundraising in the future.

Traverse has never seen photos of the inside of the Schmanska barn and asked if there is a way we could see the interior? Would be good to have them on the site if the barn is going to be rented in the future. Traverse also wanted to echo what Andrea said about the Perkins Pier meeting – it was amazing and he is looking forward to the Calahan Park meeting. Traverse also asked if coming into the NPA meetings is there any particular feedback from the public that would be helpful or are these more of a space to inform the public of what’s going on?

Sauve responded that the Planning Team was thinking of it as more informational, including using it as a space to talk about Penny for Parks and answer questions about it. It hasn’t been very competitive and would like to have more people involved in that moving forward.

Wight mentioned that that meeting can also be used as a space for what we might have missed addressing in parks in their Ward.

**311 North Avenue Management Plan: Dan Cahill, Land Steward**



Cahill opened with an outline of this portion of the meeting. First, an overview of the management plan – what are management plans and why we do them. Then he was hoping to open it up to a discussion and hear reactions from Commissioners. One of the documents shared ahead of time was the current layout and design of the bike path connector trail and is happy to answer questions about that.

311 management plan specifically has a requirement within our easement with the VT Housing and Conservation Board, which is one of the primary funders for the acquisition of the property. They granted \$500,000 towards the purchase. They hold an easement on the land and one of their requirements within that easement is that we provide a management plan and it also goes through a public input process. So coming before you all is part of the public process and speaking with the Conservation Board and this body before we go fully public with that is sort of a soft launch because you are such an invested stakeholder group that we're anticipating getting some great feedback that will help sharpen it a little bit more before bringing it to the larger community.

Management plans are documents that help us define best practices and codify the values of our park master plan, open space protection plan and help reflect those in the natural areas and natural communities that are there and get into some of the assessment of what is on site. In a space like 311, which is a little bit more than a natural area – it's an urban wild, with significant features like the path that connects through, gardens, and the stone house. The house will have its own plan, the management plan is about the land and the areas in and around the house, but it does point towards the programming of that space as well and speaks to how it connects to the use of the land. Cahill then opened it up for discussion.

Todd is impressed with the volume of this material. Very comprehensive and reading this is a great way to get a sense of how deeply Parks is connected with all of the different uses of nature, constructed space and use of the spaces. Todd then asked about the interface with Cambrian Rise – what does that look like? And specifically Abnaki programming and BIPOC engagement and how we're reaching out to communities as part of that.

Cahill responded to the last question first. In regard to working with the BIPOC community and thinking about belonging and inclusion, we're trying to be really creative in our thinking with new ways to activate the trails and the space and invite more folks in and new voices to the table. This month we're launching a poetry walk "call for poets". For the next few weeks there will be an open application process that is centering on indigenous and black perspectives. The idea is that we'll have a poetry walk that will be an annual show, and an annual process of bringing in more perspectives and showcasing different voices each time. Poetry is one of the most profound ways humans can reflect on experiences so we thought it being a natural area, creating a poetry theme that weaves in the ideas of healing and nature and how that's revolutionary. That has been a long process of working with community stakeholders (REIB, CEDO, Library, Vermont Releaf Collective). We've all been working together as a steering committee to guide the process. That's one example of thinking creatively through programming to create broader sense of identity in the space. Signage about the management plan will also hopefully allow for the community to see and learn about the opportunities to engage in the discussion about the management plan and the space. Having land acknowledgment more integrated into our documents and processes is an important frame to help continue to ground and acknowledge the history and everyone's place and presence. We know there's a lot more beyond that and a lot of that comes through with relationships. This connects to a lot of the learning opportunities and introspective personal work to learn how to be in community more authentically and directly with



different people as well. It's important we integrate as many voices as we can to try and capture everyone's experiences. We should be looking at our role not just as current stewards of the land, but also stewards of the history of these spaces as well. There's a really dynamic history here on this property and we're a part of that right now. The relationship with Cambrian Rise is emergent and ongoing. The senior housing just opened up and a building manager has been hired and we have started having meetings with them. We're trying to build that relationship and opportunities. The most magnetic thing that everyone wants to talk about is garden space! We're excited to have the opportunity to keep doing that creatively with the limited space that we have, both with garden spaces but then also working on that healing process with restoring and regenerating the land there with native plants and plants that provide food for people and wildlife.

Traverse brought up the process of naming the land and the re-naming of Texaco Beach. Is there a way to combine those and find a way to honor the history through that as well in the renaming process?

Cahill responded that that has been discussed and thinks that an intentional process and thinking about how to do that the right way would be great.

Todd asked if Cahill was looking for specific things from Commissioners.

Cahill responded that if you know of anyone who would be interested in this process, please extend the opportunity to them when we send the packet out. Just know we're about a year out from building the trail so we have some time. We've been having a lot of discussions and have working really closely with the folks at Cambrian Rise throughout the design process. It's going to be a very intensive building process as far as what it looks like to build an ADA paved path and a put in a storm water conveyance pipe in an area that is essentially sand. We are excited about the access and improvements it will bring and also the opportunities to think creatively about the regenerative plantings and what we can do in the space. It will be a big change and just wanted to note that. We're seeing a lot of the opportunities, but it's going to feel disruptive to the people who are currently using the space.

Farrell asked if while we are thinking the proposed improvements is there a particular area that Cahill would want the commissioners to weigh in.

Cahill said that he is working with the marketing team to find a way to make the input more open ended for people to weigh in on. Some sort of google form potentially. We're anticipating the most feedback will be for the gardens and top of the trail and trail experience. We want to hear from people who use the space but also others. Best case scenario is an informed process and enhanced through public discussions and processes. This is a great chance to get feedback as we as have actionable engagement with volunteering etc.

Todd asked if the Commissioners can help by explaining the long term process and the plan that 311 is undergoing when people have emotional responses to changes – we can help facilitate the understanding of the process. Act as positive PR people and engage the community about what is happening. How can we do that as Commissioners to help assist with that?

Cahill responded that there's this process and also providing more FAQs or some information that helps guide and ground and bring to life all of the hard work, time, intention and thought that has gone in



from a lot of people. And we want that to extend that and get more ideas from more people. We want folks to feel like they understand, can get the information and can ground in it.

Wight said that if you're seeing feedback on things we're posting, it would be helpful to share that longer range vision of – yes, it was sad to this big change happen but we're really excited to see what the space is going to be like now. Being able to make connections and let people know that the work we're doing to heal the land after is going to be intentional would be helpful.

Cahill mentioned the 311 tree re-homing process to save some of the smaller trees that are in the projected path and how we're engaging with community members to create new spaces for those trees. These are hard things, but letting people know that they are full of expansive opportunities will be important. He also the native planting plan to put into action after the trail has been built.

### **Oakledge 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Ben Traverse, Chair, Parks Commission**

Traverse began by sharing that this year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oakledge Park. He and Lantieri put out a call on FPF to Ward 5. Over 20 people reached out and wanted to take part in the planning efforts. They scheduled the initial planning meeting and over a dozen people attended to talk about ideas and events to celebrate. Emma and John from BPRW attended as well.

Lantieri explained that the main outcome from that first meeting was that instead of going for one big event, having smaller events throughout the year would be more conducive to the space. We haven't totally shaped out what the specifics of these events or the exact time line yet, but have come up with some basic buckets for the events. Which are: community stewardship (Green Up Day) how can we give back to the space? History discussion, with two different veins: the larger history of the park, Abnaki roots and how to integrate that story beyond the 50 years and the acquisition of the land by the City, the history of the people who have memories of the land. Sports and recreation and other sports leagues that use the space – inroads into that would be great. Public art and music. Natural events: nature tours, lake health, bird watching etc. And a specific focus on diversity and inclusion – how do we tell the indigenous story and how do we tell the story of the diverse population of people who use the park – (CEDOs One World Market). Oakledge for All. Those are the broad strokes of what this could look like. First concrete event is Green Up Day on May 1<sup>st</sup>. From there it's pretty open at this point.

Todd is seeing this as another space to solicit people's opinions and let people know about the upcoming meetings for community input. Broadcasting of what's happening.

### **Public Forum (Time Certain 6:00PM)**

Public Forum was opened at 6:00pm

No one was present for the public forum.

Public forum was closed at 6:01pm

### **FY22 General Fund and Capital Budget: Cindi Wight, Director**



Wight was hoping to bring the General Fund budget to the commission tonight, but with the Federal monies coming, we have submitted one budget but we are now submitting a 2<sup>nd</sup> budget. It would be too early to share this because we have been directed to do another round with the budget and I have not met with CAO Shad on that yet. Wight noted that with the Federal funds coming it can help support the lack of revenue and budgets, it is looking like the City will be able to fully fund our budgets as we need it. This should allow us to bring all of our budget lines back to FY19 levels.

Wight then moved onto the Capital Budget and wanted to note that this is still in draft form. It has not been shared with the mayor yet, so it is not ready to be shared widely yet. She shared her screen for the FY22 Capital Budget and went through it line by line. Shows projects, what staff person is focusing on it, where the money is coming from, the budgeted money for it and a notes section. Categories are: Penny for Parks, Central Facilities Projects, Parks Special Projects, Bike Path, Trees Capital Projects, Conservation Legacy Fund, Bike Path Maintenance and Other. If all goes well we're spending about \$3 million on Capital Projects.

Farrell understands this is still tentative but is there a priority list for things if not everything can happen.

Wight responded that things that are "shovel ready" are generally a higher priority. We're hoping to get all of them done! It's more of a capacity piece on the staff side of things.

Todd asked if it would be helpful to hire another staff member.

Wight explained that their salary would likely take away from the funds allocated for the projects, so it would be a catch 22. We are putting forward a list to the CAO around our public restrooms – enhancing our seasonal ones so they are safer and adding more year round ones. In order to do this we will need another staff person, which would be part of the proposal.

Traverse asked if there has been any indication about how much of the federal money coming in is coming to the department and if it will go towards lost revenue?

Wight responded that she is anticipating that we'll be about \$1 million short of our normal revenue for FY22 but we can budget as we normally do because of the federal money supporting our department. We also saved about \$200,000 this past year because of open positions that we were not allowed to fill, so if we have expenses we can spend the money now. It is a challenge because it is already April and you have to do budget adjustments, which takes time, as well as getting the supplies ordered. One example that we're hoping to pull around is making the Disc Golf course permanent. We have to have the money saved in this current fiscal year spent by June. Once we knew the federal money was coming we could spend some of our savings and then we don't have to find savings to make up lost revenue in FY22.

Traverse responded that if the Commission can be of any support in your efforts here to secure additional funds, I'm sure we would be happy to consider any memos you send out.

### **Director's Items**

Important to recognize when we have new staff – Kim has come to us from DPW. We also hired for the arborist technician! Hopefully by the end of this week one of the Rec Specialist positions will be filled



and will be posting the other open Rec position soon. It will include a piece about connecting with the BIPOC community.

Governor updates today – July 3<sup>rd</sup> is on! Starting in July there will be no restrictions. Recommendations but no restrictions.

We received an Arbor Day grant because of significant plantings in wards 2 & 3. The public in those neighborhoods will be receiving a mailing about it soon.

Kudos to Paul Morris, the Grounds Manager, for his focus on our playgrounds. Has taken it very seriously and has brought a manufacturer in to inspect all of the playgrounds. He has also been working on MOUs with the Little League programs in Burlington who use our fields. He'll be going to year 2 of maintenance management school in January 2022. He's hoping to attend the May meeting.

Mayor's focus and State of the City – racial equity and justice that we're thinking through how we fit into that and what is our role. Urban Park Ranger program could be a way. It would fall under Alec. It's about education of our rules and providing that presence in our parks. They would be out and about in our parks!

Met with Chief Stevens to begin thinking about the indigenous population and different partnerships they could have with the City. We are going through the different partnerships they have currently to see where we could plug in. Potentially having a parking pass that would allow Abnaki to park for free.

Naming of spaces. Whose voice are we going to get in this if we involve the same voices we always get. So we're rolling that one back for now.

Green Up Day – if anyone has a group there is a list you can sign up with Paul. Bags will be available to use!

Farrell saw the RFP for a Leddy food truck and thinks that's great.

Wight responded that it will be open until 4/12 and we're excited about it. There's the potential to have them along the south side of the arena or along the bluff. Looking at potentially extending electricity and updating the Leddy kitchen.

#### **Report from Commission on Volunteer Hours**

Lantieri had 1.5 hours, Traverse had 1.5 hours

#### **Commissioner's Items**

Traverse – Cindi is up for reappointment and will be circulating a letter to review that the Commission will be sharing with the Mayor's office.

#### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 6:40p.m. by Traverse.